

Globalization and its Implications for Education in Nigeria

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Abstract Globalization as the rapid increase in cross-border economic, social and technological exchange is not limited to industry and business. Education systems being part of the information business can be seen as the core of globalization. This paper provides an analysis of the relevant literature on the implications of globalization for education in Nigeria. The nature and objectives of global education and the move towards standardized curricula were highlighted. Perceived barriers to globalization of education and the Nigerian situation were also analyzed. This paper finally provides information and recommendations to those responsible for the planning of the educational curricula for all levels of education in Nigeria

Keywords: Globalization, Self-Image Psychomotive, Environmental

1. Introduction

Globalization is a favorable catchphrase of journalists and politicians. It has become a key idea in various areas: business theory and practice, has entered academic debates and has become a focus for discussion in education. It is commonly used as a shorthand for describing the spread and connectedness of production, communication and technologies across the world. That spread has involved the interlacing of economic and cultural activities.

Globalization involves the diffusion of ideas, practices and technologies. Giddens (1990:64) has described globalization “as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.” This informs a change in the way we understand geography and experience localness.

Generally speaking, globalization is the rapid increase in cross-border economic, social, and technological exchange. Guellen (2000) defines it as a process leading to greater interdependence and mutual awareness among economic, political and social units in the world. On his part, Rosenau (1999) defines globalization as the emergence of altered global structure driven by a skill revolution, an organization explosion, and a continuous flow of ideas, money, goods and people that is rendering long-time territorial boundaries increasingly obsolete and fostering an extensive decentralization of authority. Globalization is the transcending of boundaries that separate different countries – whether those boundaries are physical, geographical, social, cultural or financial. It is a process in which the whole planet is involved, and every day each of us comes into contact with different aspects of it. In fact, globalization

has even permeated our households, thanks to great technological advances and handy tools like the Internet. Globalization is said to empower international markets at the expense of state power, eventually creating a borderless world. This makes the social relations to become less tied to territorial distance, and territorial border hold limited significance in this circumstances (Malcom, 1995). It is the key to the locks which were previously limiting the heritage of a country within and hence, is making the barriers of cultural divide thinner by the day (Hollady 2006).

One could think that globalization is only a matter of industry and business, and that education as a moral process is no part of this development. However, if we understand education as part of the information business, education systems can be seen as the core of the globalization process. Governments are trying to compete on the global markets by placing the onus of policy on education to produce the “human capital” most appealing to global competition (Taylor, 1985). Also, Kosebalaban (2005) emphasizes that educational policy has become an ever more important part of economic, trade, labour and social policy in western countries. The world’s new initiatives are supporting life long education, integration of work and education, student mobility and joint study programmes. These initiatives can be seen as part of the global development of education. This recent development can offer new perspectives to solve educational problems.

The major burden of the first level of schooling – the primary classes – is threefold:

- To introduce children to the basic literacy systems of the ambient culture, that is, 3Rs (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic).
- To acclimatize youngsters to the events and concepts outside of their naturally occurring context, and
- To give children the opportunity to play and work together civilly with those individuals with whom they can expect to grow and eventually spend their adult years.

These activities begin globally, from the age of one to seven. Despite these laudable aims, education in the developing nations has remained modest even at the elementary level. This is why Gardner (2004) affirms that there is no doubt that across the globe, future citizens need to be literate, numerate, capable of scientific thought, and knowledgeable about the history, traditions, and governmental system of the nation in which they are being educated. The questions we are facing now are: To what extent is the educational endeavour affected by the process of globalization that is threatening the autonomy of national educational systems and the sovereignty of the nation-state as the ultimate ruler in democratic societies? How is globalization changing the fundamental conditions of an educational system premised on fitting into a community, a community characterized by proximity and familiarity (Burbules and Torres, 2000)? How prepared is our educational system to cope with the new order, that is, meeting the world’s goals for education especially at the foundation level? Given the above, this article sets out to show the importance of globalization as it concerns education and to stress the necessity of bringing up educational policies that will keep our children, especially at the foundation (elementary) level, abreast with their counterparts worldwide.

2. Globalization and Education

For countries in the vanguard of the world economy, the balance between knowledge and resources has shifted so far toward the former that knowledge has become perhaps the most important factor determining the standard of living – more than land, tools and labour. Today’s most technologically advanced economies are truly knowledge-based (World Bank 1999). Beaker (2000:8) advocated that knowledge capitalism “the drive to generate new ideas and turn them into commercial products and services, which consumers want, is now just as pervasive and powerful as any other factor of production.” According to Geveland (1999) education for the Global Century (Globalization) must help individual people to think critically and holistically, creating a skill revolution where commanding and controlling will become obsolete. However, developments in the education sector globally can lead to the following summary of the implications and demands of global information society in the education system:

- demand for widening the access to education for all
- continuous life long learning fading the boundaries between formal education and working life.
- demand for both global and local cultural developments.

Globalization and education share a symbiotic relationship as each one depends on the other for sustenance, maintenance and constant development. Education fuels globalization as nations seek to become more conscious of the culture, economy, ideology and general knowledge of other societies. This

is in part substantiated through some educational systems, particularly at the tertiary level which are designed to create citizens who are not just aware of their immediate surroundings but of the workings of the world. This can be seen from a country like United States of America that opens her door to students from various parts of the world so as to promote an environment of exchange and interaction. Hence, globalization has served to restructure education in the classroom as students are taught to think outside of their comfort zone and consider the ideas and methods of people of other nations. Various nations throughout the world are preparing their students to be participants in the global exchange. In order to facilitate this trade of information, programmes which help students gain insight into the culture of other countries have been built into their school curriculum. It is common to see universities of the world offering language study courses. Students are encouraged to gain a working knowledge and fluency of other languages apart from their native tongue. These students who come from different ethnic and social backgrounds are given the opportunity to learn and discover the world. This enhances their experience as they are able to interact with people who may be completely different from the ones they have always encountered. Students are more enlightened as they go through a profound experience abroad. Some of these schools incorporate the study of other cultures and world geography so that the students' knowledge of other places is made a part of the curriculum (Stewart, 2005).

According to Gardner (2004) the unprecedented and unpredictable movement of human beings, capital, information and cultural life forms need to be understood by the young persons who are and will always inhabit a global community. Some of the systems will become manifest through the media, but many other facets like the operation of worldwide markets will need to be taught in more formal manner.

3. Nature and Objectives of Global Education: Move Towards Standardized Curricula for Global Education

Most nations have or are moving towards standardized curricula and assessment practices, which is an indication of globalization's momentum. Such curricula, Pike and Selby (1992) argued, must reflect fundamental and far sighted changes in educational practice so as to better equip children with the necessary tools for meeting the challenges of an increasingly inter-dependent and unpredictable world. Learning in a global setting, demands the acquisition of a range of skills and a broad area of knowledge and the development of a set of attitudes which together constitute a far more fundamental critique of current educational practices. More specifically, Pike and Selby (1992), suggest that the objectives of global education should include:

➤ **Positive Self-image**

- Belief in ones potential – students should have a sense of their own worth and a belief in their own physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual potentials.
- Genuineness – Students should have the capacity to identify, own and transmit their thought, feelings and emotions.
- Curiosity – Students should want to find out more about themselves and their inter-dependent relationship with other people.

➤ **Appreciation of others**

- Diversity – Students should be willing to find the beliefs and practices of other cultural and social groups of value and interest, and be prepared to learn from them.
- Commonality – Students should appreciate the essential worth of others and the commonality of needs, rights, aspirations, behaviour and talents which bind human kind.
- New perspectives – Students should have receptivity to perspectives different from their own and be prepared to modify their own ideas and beliefs were appropriate.

➤ **Respect for justice and right**

- Defense of rights – Students should have a commitment to defending their own rights and the rights of others and the co-relative commitment to carrying out responsibilities
- Concern for justice – Students should be prepared to show solidarity with victims of injustices in their own and other societies.
- Commitment to equality – Students should have commitment to principles of equality as the basis on which relationships between individuals, groups and societies should be organized

➤ **Tolerance of Uncertainty**

- Ambiguity - Students should be prepared to tolerate ambiguity in their lives, be willing to explore

alternative paths before reaching decisions or conclusions and be prepared to struggle with problems for which there are no single, simple, specific or final solutions.

- Insecurity – Students should be prepared to accommodate moments of self-doubts and temporary feelings of insecurity in their personal relationships and in their lives.
- Conflict and change – Students should perceive conflict and change as inevitable and natural and be prepared to respond through appropriate modifications of their values, beliefs and life styles.

➤ **Capacity for Creativity**

- Students should be willing to explore new patterns of interaction and to take calculated risks in all spheres of life.
- Paradigm shift - Students should be prepared to take the creative mental leaps necessary to perceive alternative visions and versions of reality.
- Imagery and Intuition – Students should be prepared to utilize and value their natural capacities for intuition and imaginative thinking.

➤ **World Mindedness**

- Respect for life – Students should have respect for all living things and their place and function in the over-all planetary eco system.
- Altruism – Students should appreciate that in an interdependent world system, consideration of the overall good of human kind and the planet should influence their decisions and actions.

The wide range of objectives listed above suggest that simple mastery of information, concepts and definitions will no longer suffice in current global educational system. Students will have to master disciplinary moves sufficiently so that they can apply them flexibly and generatively to deal with issues that could not be anticipated by authors of text books, that is, those issues that are global in scope. The students must have the ability to tackle problems and issues that do not respect disciplinary boundaries. HIV/AIDS, large scale immigration, and global warming are examples of problems in need of interdisciplinary thinking (Today, 2006). They should have the knowledge of and ability to interact civilly and productively with individuals from quite different cultural backgrounds both within ones own society and across the planet. Woltz (1999) observed that global education needs to emphasize interpersonal competencies including the ability to think and work with others coming from very different racial, linguistic, religious and cultural backgrounds. He further observed that mastery and cultivation of these competencies will be the cornerstone of educational systems in the most successful democracies of the 21st century. Education for globalization will select for crafting and performing blended identities needed to work, think, and play across cultural boundaries. It should provide equal opportunity for all children and tolerant attitudes within and across nations.

How prepared is the Nigerian nation for this type of curriculum. The gap in availability of facilities, materials and personnel between the developed and the developing countries may leave nothing to desire. Thus, the developing countries may not be prepared for the implementation of a standardized curriculum as suggested above.

4. Barriers to the Globalization of Education

One of the problems in globalization of education is still access to basic education, not to mention the digital divide in developing countries. Sauvgeot (2000) observed that 113 million children are still out of the school system globally. According to global education evaluation (Pearson & Creed, 2000) new technologies have not been able to increase significantly the access to quality education. The potential of information and communication Technology (ICT) in widening access to education has not been fully utilized. Access to computers is still seen as the major problem in most countries. It is quite ironic that it is considered as a problem also in rich countries like Finland, France, Norway and Belgium, where the actual student computer ratio is less than 10 (Kosebolabon 2005). This being the case, how many of our young children have or will have access to computers even in a hundred years to come?

It is also observed that teachers consider their skills insufficient regardless of the actual level of training. This may be as a result of the individualistic approach in teacher education and development, which has concentrated on the skills of teachers not on the dynamics of change in schools and education as a system.

In a discussion on “Globalization, democracy and corruption” at the University of Colorado, Denver Health Sciences Centre (2002), it was observed that globalization is seen to undermine cultural diversity, deconstructing societal values, destroying group identity and destroying social cohesion. It is

also viewed as a standardizing and a commercializing force that stifles diversity and dissent and spreads western culture. These views, it is supposed, may create barriers to the growth of globalization especially in a developing country like ours where people tend to hold firmly to their beliefs and cultures.

The notion of universal education, in which all young persons in a society receive several years of competent schooling is still a distant dream in many corners of the globe (Kosebalabon, 2005). Nigeria, of course is not left out. As a result of wonderful opportunities abroad (good employment opportunities, better paid jobs, welfare and comfort), the issue of how to stymie “brain drain”, whereby students who study abroad do not return to their native lands, or even those who studied locally drift to other countries, is always under constant debate. These students retain little or no academic connection to their home countries. These problems need to be addressed if the third world nations, including Nigeria will join the world in its globalization efforts.

5. Nigeria and Global Education

Based on the objectives highlighted above it will be pertinent at this stage to consider the level of preparedness of the nation (Nigeria) for a smooth ride into the global economy. The curriculum in our educational system is still beclouded with aspects relating to simple mastery of information, concepts and definitions. We need to update our curricula in all fields/aspects of Mathematics, Science and Technology, particularly, in vocational technical courses (Ebeh, 2000). This will enable our engineering and technology education to be oriented towards inculcating in parts, the acquisition of competencies necessary for self reliance. The federal republic of Nigeria (FRN, 1981) stated that one of the specific of vocational secondary education in Nigeria is to “equip students to live effectively in our modern age of science and technology.” Emphasis is on cognitive recall of information rather than the flexible use of interdisciplinary psychomotive knowledge to solve emerging contemporary problems. The required tools and services (Computers and Internet services) are not within the reach of the average Nigerian even though Nigerians have been acclaimed to compete very favourably well with the advanced nations in this regard. Therefore, to forestall rapid growth rate in technologies, engineering and science, so many variables such as national leadership (among others), has to be looked into.

According to Mgbekem (1997), if the leader (Head of State) is the type that is disposed to developmental programmes, technological advancement will be given a boost. But when a leader is less interested in development programmes, meaningful technological advancement will be stalled. Unfortunate for Nigeria, her leaders have not shown enough commitment to technological development. Only lip-services are paid to it. For example, Ajaokuta Steel Project, which should have formed the industrial base of Nigeria was started in the 1970s and is still uncompleted and not commissioned for production up till date. A technologically oriented leader would have made Ajaokuta Steel Complex, a priority concern during his tenure and gets it completed/commissioned. Once this draw-back to Nigeria’s technological advancement is overcome by completing and commissioning the Ajaokuta Steel Complex, the issue of technological advancement would take a new tone.

6. Recommendations

To effectively move along with the globalization process, especially in the educational sector, Nigeria and other Third World countries, as well as international communities need to address the following issues:

- When considering the gap between the developments of different countries, the fading cultural identity and so on, the international communities should make conscious effort to balance various interests, especially to safeguard the interest of the less developed countries.
- A large percentage of the foreign aids from the international communities to developing countries should be allotted to the actualization of the global objectives for education.
- Globalization depends much on Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Hence, there is the need to integrate ICT into the mainstream of the Nigerian educational system beginning from the elementary level. This can be achieved through the provision of computer hardware and software, interconnectivity (Internet facilities) and constant power supply in all our schools.
- The school curricula in Nigeria should be global in scope and should prepare students for the opportunities and challenges faced by businesses operating in the global arena. Students should build an understanding of international business environments, cross-boarder movement of goods, people and technology and managerial aspects of global business.
- The curricula of Nigerian schools should incorporate knowledge of not just the economic aspects of

globalization, but also the political, social, cultural, environmental, and institutional aspects.” An aspect of globalization can be injected into the curricula of existing subjects suggest that the curriculum should incorporate all these aspects of knowledge.

- In line with Malcolm (1995) we should put in place a curriculum suitable to the era of globalization, and a democratic society in which individuals have fair degree of say, in where they live and how they live, in which the use of one’s mind to the fullest is a prominent value and in which all able bodied individuals are expected to contribute not only to the security and well being of their families but also to the health of the broader communities far beyond where they live.
- Since the implementation of any curriculum is the sole responsibility of the teacher, teacher training programmes should be made global in scope with a good dose of ICT integrated into the curriculum.

7. Conclusion

Today, we see the inception of a new movement, an apparent revolution that promises to be powerful in transforming the way we live – globalization. It improves the standard of living and economy of scale in virtually every country. However good this phenomenon is, there is the potential to cause just as many problems as it promises to solve if it is not allowed to develop evenly. The practices associated with an institution tend to be worked out by trial and error over long periods of time. While such experimentation does not guarantee a stronger and more effective institution, at least, the most problematic structures and procedures are eliminated. When it comes to educational institutions which have come to bear the primary responsibility for the intellectual and moral health of the next generation, we do not want to sacrifice our children to threats.

The forces involved in globalization have conditioned the context in which educators operate and profoundly altered people’s experience of both formal and informal education. Schools and colleges have become sites for branding and the target for corporate expansion. The impact and pervasiveness of the forces of globalization also means that they should be a fundamental focus for education and learning. This task may take one hundred years or more especially in a developing country like ours. But as a French military leader once famously remarked, “When facing an especially daunting task, in that case, we had better begin today”. The earlier we follow the world, the sooner our young generation will come abreast with their counterparts in the rest of the world. Today, all issues are international issues, and globalization demands a certain level of awareness from all of us – it is our basic responsibility as global citizens. Moreover, globalization can be a system that is built on mutual respect and understanding, and it requires us to be open- minded and tolerant.

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